FANFARES FOR TRISTAN

The legend of Tristan and Isolde has fascinated writers, painters and composers, and more recently film makers. I came to know Wagner's version of the story, with its sensuous chromaticism and hypnotic nocturnal atmosphere when I was young. A reconsideration of the opera led me to pay this musical tribute to the warrior-hero, Tristan of Bretagne, in which elements from different versions of the Tristan story are freely interwoven. A strong sense of rhythm pervades 'Fanfares for Tristan' suggesting my version of the story might be set far away from Brittany.

The piece could be seen as reminiscences passing through a dying mind. Tristan is a brave, heroic leader of men; someone who also has a restrained, courtly side. His love for Isolde, integral to the story, is passionate and intense, as well as flawed and fatal. The forest, to which early versions of the legend say the lovers fled, is filled with ruined castles and nightmarish figures, along with the calls of nocturnal creatures. Tristan's feverish state of mind as, mortally wounded, he awaits Isolde's arrival, adds urgency to the closing movement of my piece. As he dies the surge of a freed spirit is felt.

This Fantasy-Portrait (14'15") consists of an exposition, scherzino, romance, dramatic interlude and recapitulation with coda. Each section has a descriptive subtitle:

- 1. Portrait of a Warrior-Hero
- 2. Carnival Pranks with Comeuppance
- 3. Idealised Reverie
- 4. Fatal Liaison
- 5. Recollection, Death, Transfiguration

The work's fundamental motive, stated on trumpets and clarinets, is heard at the outset, before a fanfare-like tutti first subject and an agitated second subject on strings are introduced. The brief *scherzino* with its impetuous wind flourishes sees young Tristan jesting at a carnival. His hedonism results in mild comeuppance. In the *reverie*, built on a long pedal point, the fundamental motive is transformed into a quasi minimalist accompanimental figure over which a melody on high violins depicts Tristan dreaming. At the centre of the piece his *fatal liaison* with Isolde makes reference to Wagner's 'Tristan' chord. In the *finale* the exposition's tutti subject is recalled before disintegrating into a lament for the warrior-hero. The piece closes quietly with oboe and cor anglais softly interlinked -symbols of the lovers' symbiotic existence.

FANFARES FOR TRISTAN

OPUS 49

1. PORTRAIT OF A WARRIOR-HERO



























































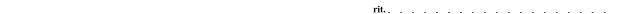














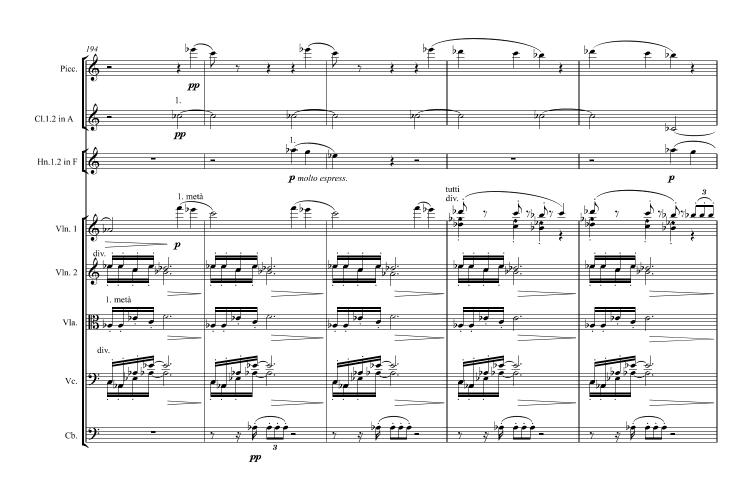


























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38 un poco meno mosso











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46 più tranquillo

















